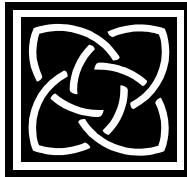


Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



Spring 2007

Volume 10 Issue 1

Under new Management !

We had quite a change around at the AGM back in January it seems. Harry Hawkins put down his gavel as Chairman (see his valedictory address below) and is replaced by Richard Stevens. Martin Railton decided that it was time to let go of the Newsletter too and so this issue comes to you courtesy of myself, Martin Joyce. I hope I shall be able to maintain Martin R's high standard. We also welcomed a new committee member, Heather Edwards, who has taken over as Publicity Officer.

Call for Articles

If you've been somewhere interesting - and especially if you took your camera - why not jot down a few notes and share your experience with other members.? It couldn't be easier now we've all gone digital (what do you mean, you don't know which button to press - what do you think your nephews and nieces are for?).

The editorial email address is :

mjoycemilburn@gmail.com

Langdale Stone Axe Quarry?

In the spirit of the above, I thought you might be interested in a visit I made to the south scree on Pike o'Stickle last month. I think it was Aaron Watson who showed us a slide of some workings in the gully-wall there and told us that it has been suggested these might have been used to quarry axe-material.

This rather took my fancy, since I have a peculiar and inexplicable interest in all things underground. So when I found myself in Langdale in the vicinity of Pike o'Stickle I thought I'd take a look.

This turned out to be easier said than done. The scree is surprisingly mobile and the top section is full of large, wobbly boulders. Lower down the going is easier but one is uncomfortably aware that the scree that you slalom down so cheerfully and with such delightful tinkling noises is composed principally of prehistoric axe flakes. I couldn't help wondering about the ethics of this at all.

Still, in the interests of scientific investigation I persisted and found the "quarry" very easily (see photo below)

The first thing I noticed was that the working was suspiciously square-cut. It doesn't look like the sort of thing that could have been produced by hitting the cliffs with a large stone! Moreover, inside, where you might have expected to find unweathered evidence of ham-

mering, the only percussion-marks were clearly modern.

Finally, at the back of the hole (it's only a couple of metres deep, by the way) a quartz vein has been worked up and to the left in a narrowing cleft.

Your fearless reporter has therefore concluded that the "prehistoric stone-axe quarry" is in fact a modern mining trial.

Of course, the mining could have enlarged an original, smaller, prehistoric scrape. Hmm.... What is certain is that someone was very busy indeed up here. The volume of axe flakes up there is of positively industrial proportions!

Martin Joyce



Pike o'Stickle : south scree workings

Looking Ahead from Behind the Chair

My time was up; very thoughtfully when the constitution of the Group was eventually drawn up, it was decided that the chairman would serve only for four years and then retire. The rule is intended to prevent any one person becoming chairman for a very long time and therefore maybe immovable! Hence our four year term and my hap-

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Members Evening 2007

A well-attended AGM and Members evening was held on January 9th. Two members gave presentations: Martin Joyce spoke on "Wells of Eden" and Anne Bell gave a talk entitled "Keeping the Barbarians Out".

Martin began by describing his surprise when he realised that a pool at the foot of a stone pillar he had stopped to examine near Morland Chuch was in fact a large spring. Although the pillar turned out to be a modern feature, the spring, labelled Powdonnet Well on the map, was clearly of much more ancient significance.

This discovery sparked a more general interest in these ancient wells, which appeared to have a close relationship with churches of our own era. Martin illustrated this by a series of maps showing how often churches have a well in close association. A good example is St Peter's at Gt Asby



St Helen's Well, Gt Asby

Martin concluded his talk with a slide of the spring at Morland. This showed one more curious feature. The spring is sited on the edge of the village and is surrounded by fields. In the background of the slide, can be seen a lady busily clearing the dead undergrowth and burning it on a bonfire. Even in these giddy days of silicon intelligence and dark matter it seems that someone still finds it important to pay attention to the concerns of rather earlier times!

Anne Bell then described a walk along Hadrian's Wall that she and her husband undertook in 2004. Careful planning was essential as they travelled from home, walked a section and returned home in the evening. They walked from east to west completing the walk over a period of weeks.

Slides illustrated their journey from Segedunum, the fort at the eastern end of the wall, to Bowness on Solway. The first, taken at Segedunum showed a list of the names of those who constructed the wall, which immediately provided a human interest

Travelling west, Anne and her husband had opportunities to explore many features such as the well-preserved Poltross Burn milecastle.

The fort at Chesters, which was built to defend a bridge carrying the wall across the Tyne, interested Anne as the remains of the bridge can be seen and it was a chance to compare the ruined bathhouse there with the reconstructed bathhouse at Segedunum



Bathhouse, Chesters

The Hadrian's Wall National Trail ends, or starts, at Bowness on Solway and although there is no evidence of the wall here, Roman stonework can be seen in present-day buildings.

Anne concluded by recommending the experience to the group

Phyllis Rouston

Early Medieval Cumbria

Appleby Archaeology Group welcomed Rachel Newman, of Oxford Archaeology North, to their February meeting when she spoke about an archaeological project to draw together information on early medieval life in the north west.

The period extends from the fifth to the tenth century. Following the collapse of the Roman empire a number of small kingdoms emerged which were later incorporated into the kingdom of Northumbria. The decline of Northumbria in the late 8th century led to a period of unrest before the two kingdoms of England and Scotland were established.

The evidence for this period is sparse, and until the 1970s, came from historical sources such as Bede and the Anglo Saxon Chronicles, antiquarians reports and a few scattered finds. Since then a number of sites, have been identified, often by chance, when excavations have been done to investigate another period. Much of the material found can now be dated using radio-carbon techniques. Two of the examples Rachel gave were of an excavation at Lancaster University, which was originally thought to be a Romano-British site of the 1st century which dating showed to have been re-occupied in the 8th-10th centuries and secondly at an Iron Age hill fort at Thirlmere where evidence from the peat indicates an early medieval date rather than one from the Iron Age (800BC-43AD).

Rachel briefly described two other sources of evidence place names and stone sculptures. Place names can indicate a particular type of settlement. Names, for example, with elements of the Old English and the Old Norse *cherch* and *kirk* point to the presence of a church and the Old English suffixes *ham* and *tun* are often found in the better agricultural land. However they are not a fully reliable guide since names with Old Norse components were still being given to places after the Norman Conquest.

There are many sculptured stones in Cumbria. A number, including the cross at Bewcastle, are in the North-

umbrian tradition of the 8th century and indicate Christian communities. The later carvings, of the 9th-10th centuries, such as the cross at Gosforth, show a Scandinavian influence and may indicate the merging of cultures.

Rachel continued by describing three excavations in more detail. In 1991 a site, east of the Roman fort at Brougham, revealed part of a rectangular building and four



Gosforth Cross

grubenhaus. These are seen as hollows in the ground, measuring 4 metres by 2.5 metres, and which would, when occupied, have had a simple supra-structure and possibly a suspended floor. These are typically Anglo Saxon and are the only ones in the north west. Artefacts found nearby included some loom weights and a purse clasp of the 7th-8th centuries. There was also a kiln for the manufacture of crude pottery previously thought to be Bronze Age.

Bede mentions a monastery at Dacre but the location is not given. Excavations over the years have found evidence to suggest that Dacre, Cumbria, was an early medieval ecclesiastical site. A medieval church stands there today and there is evidence of a curved boundary indicative of an early, possibly Celtic, churchyard. A large Christian cemetery has been excavated and coffin nails from the 9th-10th centuries were found in the soil. Many of the artefacts, which included fragments of window glass

from the 6th or 7th centuries, an 8th or 9th centuries gold ring and a copper escutcheon, suggest that Dacre was a high status site. Perhaps most significant was the finding of a stylus which would have been used for writing on wax at a time when literacy was the preserve of churchmen.

The most recent finds came in 2004 from Viking burials at Cumwhitton. This site was discovered when two brooches were found by someone using a metal detector. The subsequent excavation revealed six burials, four men and two women. The graves were rich in grave goods. Evidence indicates that these were people of importance, possibly first generation settlers from Ireland who died as pagans but were aware of the Christian burial custom of an east west alignment. The grave goods included swords, spears, belt buckles, spurs, brooches and beads. These artefacts have all been X-rayed at the English Heritage Ancient Monuments Laboratory and are now being conserved before eventual display at the Tullie House Museum.

Rachel concluded by saying the last thirty years had increased our knowledge of the early medieval period, although much remains to be discovered and that each new find led to more questions. Where, for example, did those six Vikings live?

Phyllis Rouston



A sword and beads from one of the graves. Picture courtesy of the Portable Antiquities Scheme.



Help wanted with Group Website

We would like to start a website for the group to help publicise our events and share information. However nobody on the committee feels they have the time or expertise to develop the idea. If you have any skills or experience you feel you could share, please call Harry on 01768 864340

Request to Members with Email

If you are a member and have an Email address, would you please send it (if you have not already done so), as an email message, to our Secretary, Phyllis Rouston. This will help us with keeping you informed about group events and last minute changes. Thank you.

Send an email with the header:
“Appleby Archaeology Group”
 to phyl@rouston.plus.com

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py retirement from the chair. However, I am not allowed to escape immediately and I have been asked, with a final bang of the gavel, to write a few thoughts as an ex-chairman.

Next year Appleby Archaeology will be 10 years old and although the precise date of birth is disputed it is universally acknowledged that the Group has grown to be a successful and well supported society drawing in members from all parts of the Upper Eden Valley. The fact we are called Appleby Archaeology has led some people to think the group is just concerned with the town of Appleby whereas the name is a reflection of where the group began and where we meet and our horizons lie way beyond the parochial boundaries of the borough. Archaeology is the interest that brings us together in the Supper Room on winter evenings and out on field excursions in the spring and summer is, it is a field of enquiry that is not restrained by boundaries of parish or district but one which inspires interest and enthusiasm by subject and historical period. We have strived to meet that interest and enthusiasm by engaging speakers from a wide range of the archaeological disciplines to talk on subjects from prehistory to the recent past of the Second World War. Aware that archaeologically little actually happens in the Eden district and little more apart from Carlisle, in the county, we have also drawn in speakers to talk about archaeology in other places such as Orkney, Shetland, Norfolk and even the Slovakian Republic.

As we have listened and learnt we also become aware of how little is known and even less is written about the archaeology and history of the Eden Valley, there is no corpus of knowledge, no book that can be recommended to friend or visitor. We also became aware for example, how the Romans with their Wall dominate Roman studies in Cumbria and how by comparison, neglected are the forts and ways of the Eden Valley. Equally, pre-history has had little attention, the limestone uplands surrounding the valley has one of the highest concentrations of settlement sites in the North but few have been excavated with modern techniques and there is little understanding of the why, when, why and who of their occupation. The Early Medieval Period is Dark all over Cumbria but there are tantalizing local

glimpses at Ninekirks near Brougham and in the centres of the fell edge villages. The Later Middle Ages tend to be regarded solely as times of continual strife and raiding so attention is given to tower houses and castles and the fact that there were long periods of relative peace is ignored; the questions of why the villages, why shaped like that, when first established, designed or organic, continue to elude, questions which could be partly answered by good archaeology.

Looking ahead, our one day conferences, the first on the **Romans in Eden** and this year **The People and the Land; Settlement in the Eden Valley from Pre-History to the Present Day**, are intended to try and redress the balance, to stimulate interest locally and wider afield, to draw in experts who have studied the area to give their thoughts and to stimulate ideas for us to adopt and follow. There is much to learn and to do, much can be done by members themselves, more by a group working together. Unhappily our project at Kirkland has stalled. We had hoped it would give the Group focus, an actual excavation of a possible prehistoric settlement and we now need to look again for another site to study and to draw members together. Talks and conferences provide places to share ideas and to learn what is happening elsewhere but to learn more about our own locality we have to do it ourselves, we need to dig.

Harry Hawkins

Summer Events

Brackenber Moor Tuesday 22nd May 2007

Evening walk to explore the varied archaeology of Brackenber Moor, including a possible prehistoric settlement and Roman Signal Station. Meet 7.00pm by Flodders Tarn (NY 718 195) on Brackenber Moor, near Appleby. Take the left turn at Coupland Beck onto the road to Hilton. The tarn is on the left after the golf club house and before Brackenber.

Threlkeld Mining Museum and Iron Age Village Saturday 23rd June 2007

An opportunity to view "Europe's largest collection of vintage quarrying machinery" and visit the superbly-preserved Iron Age settlement mentioned by Andrew Hoane last year. Meet 2.00pm outside the museum (NY 325 247) : Approximate cost £5

Whitley Castle Tuesday 17th July

A 2 hour walk taking in the impressive Roman fort, Bastle houses and surrounding local landscape under the guidance of Alistair Robertson. Meet outside the Village Bakery in Melmerby at 6.30 to car share. If you plan to travel independently please note that the tour will commence at around 7pm and that parking opportunities are limited.



SENDER:

Appleby Archaeology Group, The White House, Brampton, Appleby, CA16 6JS
Newsletter Editor: Martin Joyce Email: mjoycemilburn@gmail.com